

Montana Leaders Fight To Preserve Empire Builder Service



Eastbound Empire Builder arrives at Shelby during a spring snowstorm.

For nearly 75 years, Amtrak's Empire Builder has provided essential transportation service to Montana communities along its 700-mile route across the Hi-Line. In addition to supporting the area's economy, the Empire Builder provides a vital transportation alternative to these communities, especially during Montana's winters.

Residents and local officials in these communities have therefore been very concerned about recent proposals in Washington D.C. that could reduce or eliminate federal funding for long-distance passenger rail routes such as the Empire Builder. Fortunately, local advocates and officials at all levels of government in Montana are working to keep this critical service alive.

The federal government provides financial assistance to the Empire Builder and other long-distance routes on the national passenger rail system. However, this would change if Congress approves the Administration's recently introduced Passenger Rail Investment Reform Act which would require states to take responsibility for all operating costs for long-distance routes within six years. Given the budget problems faced by most states, this requirement would essentially doom long-distance passenger rail service in the U.S. That is why Governor Martz, Senator Burns, Congressman Rehberg, and Senator Baucus have gone on record in strong opposition to the Administration's proposed legislation. All four have also asked Congress to support legislation that would provide long-term federal support for long-distance rail lines. Senator Burns is one of four cosponsors of an alternative bill titled the American Rail Equity Act, and the other members of Montana's delegation are pursuing other initiatives to preserve federal funding for the Empire Builder.

As chair of the Western Governor's Association (WGA), Governor Martz has developed a resolution on this issue for consideration by her fellow governors at WGA's annual meeting in September at Big Sky. The resolution calls for continued federal funding for long-distance passenger rail routes like the Empire Builder. The Governor and MDT's Director Dave Galt also recently met with Amtrak to discuss coordinated efforts to save the Empire Builder.

Montana state officials involved in transportation and economic issues are providing important assistance to Governor Martz and Montana's congressional delegation in their efforts to preserve Empire Builder service. For example, although many have pointed to the Empire Builder's importance to Montana's economy over the years, no one has ever quantified these benefits. To address this need for hard data, the Montana Departments of Commerce, Agriculture, and Transportation co-sponsored a study earlier this year to examine the benefits of the Empire Builder to the local and state economies. The study concluded the Empire Builder contributes almost \$14 million to Montana's economy each year.

Thanks in part to these efforts by Montana's congressional delegation, Governor Martz, and other state and local officials, there is hope that the Empire Builder will celebrate its 75th birthday in 2004 with many more to follow.

For more information, contact Tom Steyaert at 444-7646 or tsteyaert@state.mt.us, or view the Amtrak Economic Benefit Analysis at www.mdt.state.mt.us/planning.

Empire Builder Benefits:

- Direct spending in Montana by nonresident Empire Builder riders and Amtrak is conservatively estimated at between \$5.3 million and \$5.7 million annually.
- The benefits associated with Amtrak intercity transportation in Montana total at least \$7.6 million annually.
- Expenditures by nonresident Empire Builder passengers in Montana result in an addition of \$135,000 annually in state and local tax revenues.
- Fifty-nine Amtrak employees in Montana are paid annual wages of \$2,386,805. Additionally, Amtrak annually spends \$1.3 million to \$1.7 million on fuel, station maintenance, food, and charter of motor coaches when required. Thus, direct spending by Amtrak in Montana is between \$3.7 million and \$4.1 million annually.

Source: *Analysis of the Economic Benefits of the Amtrak Empire Builder to Montana*

Lolo Pass Visitor Center & Rest Area Opens



When Lewis and Clark and their fellow explorers crossed Lolo Pass in 1805 and 1806, food was scarce, the weather was extreme, and the trail was difficult to follow. Modern-day travelers retracing the route

of Lewis and Clark and their Native American predecessors enjoy the benefits of a modern U.S. Highway 12 that allows thousands of visitors to visit this beautiful and historic area each year. This experience has been enhanced through a cooperative effort between MDT, the Idaho Transportation Department (ITD), and the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) to build a new rest area and visitor center at the famous pass.

The new Lolo Pass Visitor Center and Rest Area was formally dedicated on June 27 in a ceremony that included officials from Idaho, Montana, the U.S. Forest Service, and Native American tribes. The officials spoke of the rich history of the area and the need for a safe and attractive facility that provides visitors with an opportunity to learn more about the rich history of this area.

The centerpiece of the new facility is a log building designed to look like an old ranger station. The building includes Lewis and Clark and Native American interpretive displays, modern restrooms, and an information center manned by USFS staff.



The area outside the building includes an interpretive trail, picnic tables, and a parking area.

L'Heureux Page Werner PC of Great Falls led the design of the project which was constructed by Bodell Construction of Missoula. Funding for the project came from MDT, ITD, and the USFS.

The Lolo Pass Visitor Center and Rest Area project is part of

MDT's efforts to improve the number, quality, and maintenance of Montana's rest areas in response to public input. These efforts have led to the construction of new rest areas at Sweet Grass, Lost Trail Pass, Bozeman, Lolo Pass, and Clearwater Junction over the last few years. In addition, MDT is currently rebuilding the Dena Mora Rest Area on Lookout Pass and is planning several other major rest area projects around Montana.

Photos courtesy of the U.S. Forest Service.

Limited Go-ahead for Scenic/Historic Byways

In response to an offer of assistance by the Tourism Advisory Council (TAC) and Travel Montana, the Montana Transportation Commission recently gave the go-ahead for an effort to develop draft rules for a limited Montana Scenic/Historic Byway Program.

Efforts to develop a Montana scenic byway program date back to the 1960's. Although the early attempts failed due to concerns about the program's impact on private property rights and highway users, the efforts ultimately succeeded in 1999 when the Montana Legislature gave the Montana Transportation Commission and MDT the authority to develop a Montana Scenic/Historic Byway Program. However, the Commission and MDT have been unable to move forward with the program for a number of reasons including Federal Highway Administration concerns about private property protection and federal outdoor advertising laws.

The Commission-approved effort will involve a Scenic/Historic Byway Advisory Council, including several TAC members, that will develop draft program rules for the Transportation Commission to consider. If the Transportation Commission approves the draft rules, MDT will initiate a formal rulemaking process including opportunities for public input before the Transportation Commission makes its final decision.

Due to the private property and outdoor advertising issues, the Transportation Commission is limiting development of the draft rules to routes that are entirely on public or tribal lands.

For more information on this process or scenic byways, contact Kristine Christensen at 444-9240 or by e-mail at krchristensen@state.mt.us.

New Highway Map For 2003-2004



Montana's new highway map is out and available for free distribution at various visitor information centers across the state.

This year's publication features a variety of enhancements including the return of the mileage chart, a larger font size for the city index, solid color for Indian reservations, the addition of the recently designated Upper Missouri River Breaks

National Monument, and a lighter background color for greater legibility. The map continues to include city insets; traffic regulations; weather report, road condition, and emergency phone numbers; Montana's state symbols; and a map and narrative on Lewis and Clark's expedition through Montana.

There's a wealth of information about our state free for the asking. Call 800-VISIT MT (847-4868) or go to www.visitmt.com to obtain information about fishing, camping, lodging, skiing, golf, or other activities.

You may order maps by calling 444-6119 or at www.mdt.state.mt.us/map/order_hwymap.html.

Pat Saindon Catches the Retirement Bus

After more than 30 years of service to Montana's citizens, Pat Saindon retired from MDT on September 5.

Pat's transportation career began in 1975 when she was hired to manage the Valley County Council on Aging (COA) program in her hometown of Glasgow. She quickly realized there was a desperate need for transportation services for seniors and the disabled in Glasgow and applied for federal funding to purchase a vehicle. Federal transit programs were at that time administered by the Urban Mass Transit Administration, which was in the final stages of establishing a new capital assistance grant program for the elderly and disabled. Pat's efforts resulted in the Valley County COA receiving the first grant and vehicle in the United States through this program. Federal funding paid for 80 percent of the vehicle and Valley County matched with 20 percent. Pat put her creative talents to work in raising local matching funds through a variety of efforts including bake sales and raffles.

In 1979, Pat took charge of the Montana Department of Commerce's (DOC) transit programs. She later became administrator of DOC's Transportation Division and managed DOC's rail and transit programs until 1991 when the Legislature combined DOC's Transportation and Aeronautics Divisions with the Department of Highways to create the Montana Department of Transportation. At that time, Pat was named administrator of MDT's Rail, Transit and Planning Division where she has since been responsible for Montana's multimodal transportation planning and programming functions. Her accomplishments during that time included the development of TranPlan 21, Montana's first multimodal transportation plan, the innovative Community Transportation Enhancement Program, and MDT's nationally recognized Performance Programming Process.

During her career, Pat served on the National Rural Transit Advisory Program Board and assisted in establishing the Multi-State Technical Assistance Program. Under her leadership, Montana was the first state to establish a drug and alcohol program as well as a peer-to-peer program. She also served on the Standing Committees for Public Transportation and Planning for the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials and was a member of a Transportation Research Board committee for eight years.

Pat plans to enjoy her retirement by spending more time with her children, volunteering, working on her house, and improving her golf swing.



Cooke City Celebrates All-American Road



Cooke City celebrated the dedication of the west section of the Beartooth All-American Road on May 24 with a ribbon-cutting ceremony, a skit featuring historical characters, and shoo-fly pie (Cooke City was once named Shoo Fly).

Speakers included Frank Walker, assistant superintendent of Yellowstone Park; Becky Heath, Gallatin Forest supervisor;

Betsy Baumgart from Travel Montana; Gene Bryan, executive director of the Cody Chamber of Commerce; and Breta Duncan, who represented MDT.

Ken Britton of the Gardiner Ranger District, Gallatin National Forest, presented a check to Suzy Hahn of the Cook City Chamber of Commerce and Josh Kellar, northern Rocky Mountain coordinator of the Western Resource Conservation and Development Association, for the start of a local visitor center and mining museum.

Zanto Joins Division Staff



Lynn Zanto was recently named supervisor of the Rail, Transit and Planning Division's new Statewide and Urban Planning Section. Section responsibilities include coordination of transportation planning issues in Montana's 15 urban areas as well as statewide transportation planning responsibilities such as TranPlan 21, tourism and rest area planning, and economic analysis.

Lynn's past experience includes positions as an analyst with the Legislative Fiscal Division, supervisor of MDT's Urban Planning Section, and planner with MDT's Systems Impact Analysis office.

Lynn can be contacted at 444-3445 or lzanto@state.mt.us.



Helena Dial-a-Ride Celebrates New Name & New Trolley

The Helena community recently celebrated two major events—the re-

naming of its transit service and the arrival of the community's first modern trolley.

The name change from Helena Dial-a-Ride to Helena Area Transit Service, or HATS, is the result of recent service changes from an entirely demand-responsive service to one that also provides checkpoint and fixed-route services. The name also reflects the expansion of service to East Helena.

The purchase of the new 27-passenger trolley was the result of a cooperative effort involving HATS, the Helena Business Improvement District (BID), and MDT. MDT contributed 80 percent of the funding for the trolley and the Business Improvement District provided matching funds. HATS will operate the trolley on a fixed route linking Helena's historic downtown and the new Great Northern development. Although the trolley re-

sembles the trolleys that used to travel Helena's streets, it includes essential modern conveniences such as air-conditioning, automatic tire chains, and a wheelchair lift. The trolley is the first ever purchased through MDT's capital assistance program.

Local and MDT officials celebrated the unveiling of the new name and trolley at a ribbon-cutting event on August 13. Participants included HATS Manager Ed Robinson, Helena City Commissioner Sandra Oitzinger, BID Chairman Dave Duensing, City Manager Tim Burton, and MDT Multimodal Planning Bureau Chief Dick Turner. The event also included a special award to driver Gene Hicks for his 25 years of service to the Helena community.

Pat Sanders of MDT's Transit Section assisted in developing the specifications for the trolley and coordinated the purchase process. For more information on the trolley or the capital assistance program, contact Pat at 444-4265 or e-mail him at psanders@state.mt.us.



Fall Workshops Planned for Transit Grant Programs

The formal application process for Montana's Fiscal Year 2005 transit grants is about to begin. MDT's Transit Section is gearing up for the application processes and will conduct workshops on the Capital Assistance Program and the Transportation Assistance for the Disabled and Elderly (TransADE) Program in September and October. Both programs are available to any eligible organization that provides transportation services exclusively to the elderly and persons with disabilities.

The Capital Assistance Program provides 80 percent in federal funds that must be matched with 20 percent local funds. The TransADE Program provides operating funds on a 50/50 funding basis to agencies serving the elderly and disabled that have developed a coordinated transportation system in their service areas.

The workshops, which will provide information on eligibility criteria and timelines, will take place at the following locations and times.

Helena: September 16-17 (Tuesday & Wednesday)
35th Governor's Conference on Aging
Colonial Hotel Red Lion
2301 Colonial Drive
September 16: *TransADE*; 10:30 am – noon
September 17: *Capital Assistance*; 10:30 am – noon

Butte: September 30 (Tuesday)
Belmont Senior Citizens Center
615 East Mercury Street
TransADE Workshop: 10:00 am – noon
Capital Assistance Workshop: 1:00 pm – 3:00 pm

Missoula: October 1 (Wednesday)
MDT Missoula District Office
Missoula Construction Conference Room
2100 West Broadway
TransADE Workshop: 10:00 am – noon
Capital Assistance Workshop: 1:00 pm – 3:00 pm

Great Falls: October 2 (Thursday)
MDT Great Falls District Office
Great Falls Construction Conference Room
200 Smelter Avenue NE
TransADE Workshop: 10:00 am – noon
Capital Assistance Workshop: 1:00 pm – 3:00 pm

Billings: October 7 (Tuesday)
MET Transit
1705 Monad Street
TransADE Workshop: 10:00 am – noon
Capital Assistance Workshop: 1:00 pm – 3:00 pm

Glasgow: October 28 (Tuesday)
Valley County Courthouse
501 Court Square
TransADE Workshop: 10:00 am – noon
Capital Assistance Workshop: 1:00 pm – 3:00 pm

Applications for FY 2005 capital assistance and TransADE grants are due to the Transit Section **no later than Monday, February 2, 2004**. The Transit Section and the multiagency Selection and Screening Committee will review applications by March 15, and results will be announced before April 30, 2004.

If you have questions about these workshops or locations, please contact Pat Sanders at 444-4265 or psanders@state.mt.us.

Got Funding Needs???



It's the time of year again when Montana's transit providers start to think about how they can secure more funds for their systems.

Fortunately, in addition to the traditional federal funding programs, Montana's transit providers have a new state funding source thanks to a program created by the 2001 Legislature. In July, MDT's Transit Section finished distributing the first grants from the Transportation Assistance for the Disabled and Elderly (TransADE) Program to 12 providers across Montana. Now is the time to start the long process that will result in the next round of grants from this innovative program. Following is an overview of TransADE:

Basics

- TransADE is a state-funded program that provides operating funds for transportation services for the elderly and persons with disabilities.
 - Operating assistance is on a 50/50 funding ratio.
- If local match is an issue for your agency, remember that you can use funding in your existing budget as match for this program as long as it is not also being used as match for other programs.**
- Funding comes from a 25-cent fee on the registration or re-registration of vehicles.
 - Transit providers must apply for funding each year.

Eligible Recipients

Counties, incorporated cities and towns, transportation districts, or nonprofit organizations providing transportation services for persons 60 years of age or older and persons with disabilities.

Coordination Requirements

MCA 7-14-112 requires that TransADE encourage coordination of transportation services for the elderly and persons with disabilities.

- Each eligible applicant receiving funds under this program shall:
 - Coordinate its activities with other service providers in its service area;
 - Include in its application evidence that the proposed project will not duplicate other services provided; and
 - Demonstrate how the proposed project will be integrated with specialized transportation services provided by transit systems within the applicant's service area.
- At a minimum, the following points must be addressed:
 - Address and document the transportation needs within the service area;
 - Identify all other transportation providers in the service area;
 - Explain how services are going to be coordinated with the other transportation providers in the service area;
 - Indicate how services are going to be expanded to meet the unmet needs of senior citizens and persons with disabilities who are dependent on specialized transportation.

- Include documentation of coordination with other local transportation programs within the service area including:
 - utilization of existing resources and equipment to maximize the delivery of services; and
 - the projected increase in ridership and expansion of service.

If you have any questions or need additional information, contact David Jacobs at 444-6120 or djacobs@state.mt.us.

Oct. 8 is Walk-to-School Day

INTERNATIONAL



OCTOBER 8, 2003

On Wednesday, October 8, thousands of children across Montana will take part in the fifth annual Walk-to-School Day, an international event that celebrates the benefits of walking and biking.

Walk-to-School Day teaches children about safe walking behaviors such as how to cross streets and how to select safe routes to school. In addition, the event promotes physical fitness and gives parents an opportunity to spend more time with their children. If this sounds good to you, put on your walking shoes on October 8 and walk your children to school.

New Bike/Pedestrian Resources Available!

MDT recently expanded and upgraded its supply of bicycle and pedestrian safety resources available to the public. These free resources include share-the-road bumper stickers, window statics, and posters; a new bicyclist and pedestrian safety brochure for children; red blinking lights for nighttime visibility; and two new brochures that list Montana bicyclist and pedestrian laws.

To order these items, contact Carol Strizich at 444-9273 or cstrizich@state.mt.us.



Friendly Cycling in Missoula



Shady Grove Trail, a CTEP-funded shared-use path, winds through Missoula

This spring the League of American Bicyclists designated Missoula a Bicycle-Friendly Community. Missoula was one of only fourteen communities to receive an award in the nationwide contest to recognize municipalities that actively support cycling.

The awards committee

noted that over 50 percent of Missoula's arterial streets have bike lanes and over 70 percent have lanes or wide shoulders either in place or in the planning stage. In addition, a comprehensive travel behavior survey indicated 5 percent of the city's commute trips are on bicycles.

Among the factors the committee considered in evaluating applicants were bicycle promotion and education efforts, traffic law enforcement for both motorists and cyclists, and traffic engineering facilities and policies.

MDT's Community Transportation Enhancement Program (CTEP) has participated in many of Missoula's bike/pedestrian projects. Over the years Missoula has invested about \$3 million in CTEP funds on these projects. Almost all of those funds have gone to facilities for pedestrians and bicyclists.

These projects link with many other bike or pedestrian paths, lanes, or routes within and around Missoula. The map on page 7 depicts CTEP projects in and near Missoula. Below we've listed some of the highlights of Missoula's pedestrian and bicyclist program. The numbers following each item correspond with the numbers on the map.

- A one-half-mile-long shared-use path was built along the north side of the Clark Fork River. This path connects to the California Street pedestrian bridge over the Clark Fork. (4)
- A one-half-mile-long shared-use path was built north of the railroad tracks between Grand and Scott Streets. This path connects to the pedestrian bridge over the railroad yard. (10)
- Shared-use paths were built along old Milwaukee Railroad right-of-way. Two of them have been built so far—one between Russell and Hickory in an east-west direction and the other along the Bitterroot Branch in a northeast-southwest direction between South 4th and 14th Streets. (8) (6)
- A bicycle path and sidewalk were constructed adjacent to a three-mile section of North Reserve Street. (1)
- Sidewalks were constructed along West Broadway and around Playfair, Spartan, Bonner, and Rose Parks. (5) (3)
- A pedestrian tunnel was built underneath the Orange Street Bridge south of the Clark Fork near downtown. (2)
- Bike lanes along Stephens Avenue were constructed as part of a landscaping and sidewalk project. (7)

Missoula County has completed several projects in the Missoula area:

- Shoulder widening and walkway projects were constructed west of the city to accommodate bicyclists and pedestrians along 7th Street, Humble Road, North Avenue, South Avenue, and Clements Road. (12) (13) (15)
- A one-mile-long walkway paralleling Cote Lane will be under construction this fall. (16)

And, there is more to come! Future CTEP-funded projects in Missoula include the following:

- A one-mile-long shared-use path in the South Hills area will link the southern end of Reserve Street to Arrowhead Drive. (11)
- Structural restoration is planned for the Van Buren pedestrian bridge near the University over the Clark Fork River. (17)
- A one-mile shared-use path is planned along the old Milwaukee Road right-of-way, probably between Davis and Russell Streets. (9)
- A walkway is also planned along either side of Training Drive. (14)

Somebody once said that pedestrian and bicycle facilities are an indicator species of a livable community. Missoula and Missoula County have taken this to heart—we congratulate them on their past, present, and future bicycle and pedestrian projects!

Thomas Martin Announces Retirement

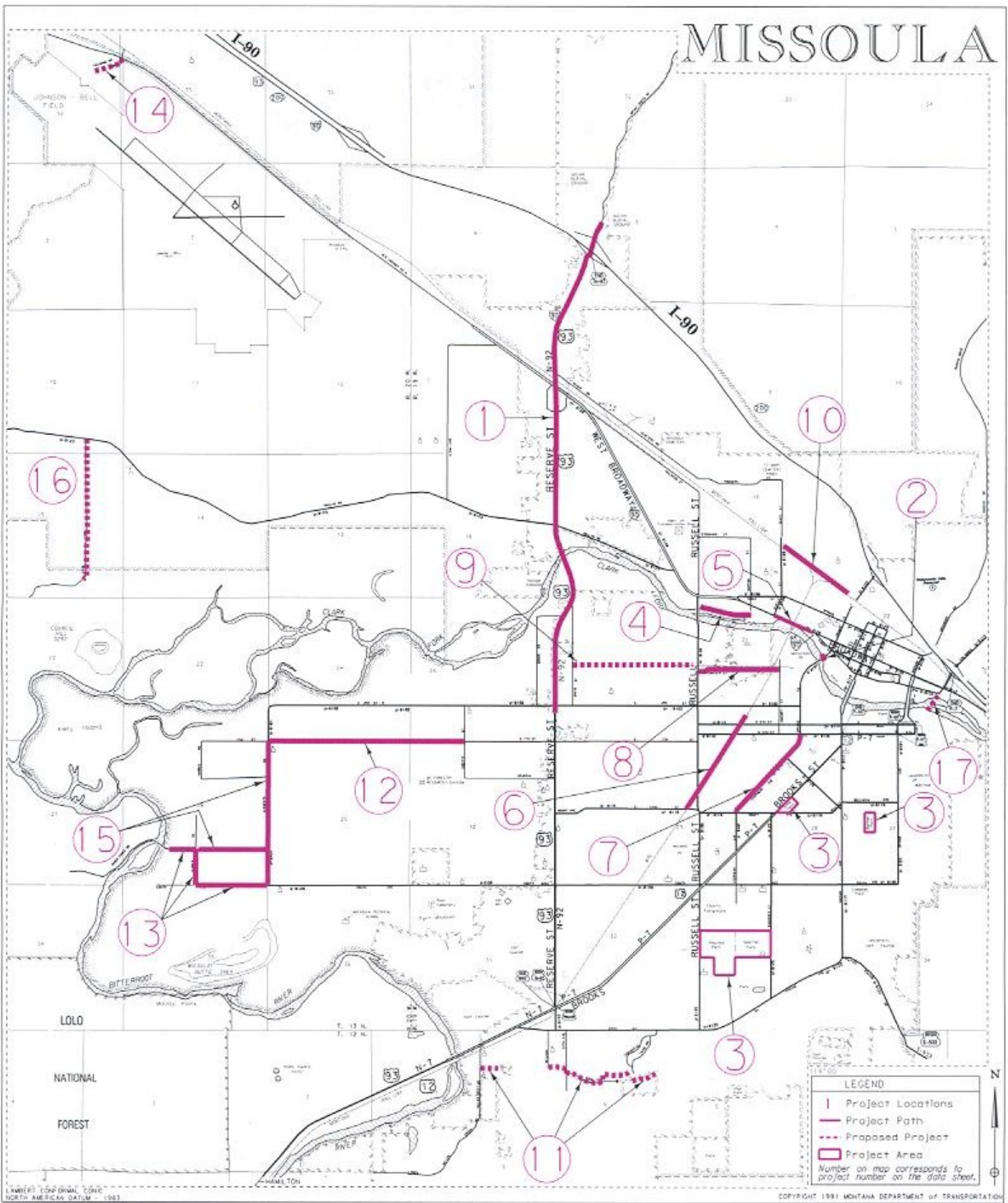


CTEP bureau chief Tom Martin retired on September 5 after more than 33 years of service to MDT and the state of Montana.

Tom's career with the department began in 1970 in the Engineer-in-Training Program. He became Missoula's first district traffic engineer and later served as the materials research engineer at MDT headquarters in Helena. In 1979 he was asked to develop and manage the

Preconstruction Project Management System. In 1990 he moved to the Right-of-Way Bureau where, for the next ten years, he was assistant bureau chief and then bureau chief. For the last three years he has been bureau chief for the Community Transportation Enhancement Program.

In announcing Tom's retirement, acting Planning Division Administrator Sandra Straehl said, "After 33+ years with the Department, Tom has certainly earned a change of pace, but his enthusiasm for CTEP and the communities it serves will be missed."



*CTEP is the Community Transportation Enhancement Program. For more information, contact acting Bureau Chief Richard Knatterud at 444-9409 or rknatterud@state.mt.us.

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Rail, Transit & Planning Telephone Numbers

Only the most frequently requested numbers are listed here. For an area or person not listed, call 800-714-7296 (in Montana only) or 406-444-3423. The TTY number is 406-444-7696 or 800-335-7592.

Administrator (Sandra Straehl, acting).....	444-7692
.....	sstraehl@state.mt.us
Bike/Pedestrian (Carol Strizich)	444-9273
.....	cstrizich@state.mt.us
CTEP (Richard Knatterud, acting)	444-9409
.....	rknatterud@state.mt.us
Map Orders	444-6119
Multimodal Planning (Dick Turner)	444-7289
.....	dturner@state.mt.us
Projects (Gary Larson).....	444-6110
.....	glarson@state.mt.us
Secondary Roads (Wayne Noem)	444-6109
.....	wnoem@state.mt.us
Road Data & Mapping (Zia Kazimi)	444-6111
.....	zkazimi@state.mt.us
Traffic Data (Dan Bisom).....	444-6122
.....	dbisom@state.mt.us
Transit (Janis Winston).....	444-4210
.....	jwinston@state.mt.us
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MDT's mission is to serve the public by providing a transportation system and services that emphasize quality, safety, cost effectiveness, economic vitality and sensitivity to the environment.

Rail, Transit & Planning Division Montana Department of Transportation

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P.O. Box 201001
Helena, Montana 59620-1001
800-714-7296



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Federal Hazard Elimination Program

What is the Hazard Elimination Program?

The Hazard Elimination Program is a federal program that funds safety improvements at high-hazard accident locations. Some examples of the types of projects addressed with these funds are signing, striping, delineation, guardrail installation, slope flattening, and roadway realignment.

Who manages the program?

MDT's Safety Management Section annually reviews investigated accidents of record and sites submitted by local agencies in order to develop a priority list of locations that could participate in this program.

Where does the money come from?

Ninety percent of the money for safety improvements at these locations comes from the federal government (Highway Trust Fund). Ten percent comes from the state or local governments.

Who is eligible?

To be eligible, a city or county must regularly report accidents to the Montana Highway Patrol for recording in the Transportation Information System. The proposed improvement must not be a maintenance function.

What are the goals of the Hazard Elimination Program?

The goal of the Safety Management System and the Hazard Elimination Program is to reduce the number and severity of crashes on Montana roadways.

How are high-hazard locations identified?

High-hazard locations are identified by accident trends based on the number of crashes, accident rates, severity of crashes, or a combination of these factors.

How many locations can applicants submit from each city or county?

Applicants may submit up to five locations annually. These sites will be included in the overall statewide ranking and priority listing.

What information should we submit with the application?

You will need to include a safety priority list, accident analysis, traffic information, and proposed improvements. (See the application on the back of this page.)

What is the review and approval process?

After MDT receives all the applications from participating cities or counties, the Safety Management Section develops a list of priorities according to benefit/cost ratio. Next we develop a program for improvement subject to availability of funds and a benefit/cost ratio greater than 1.0. The Transportation Commission approves the list of projects and includes it in their minutes.

Where should we send the application?

Safety Management Section
Montana Department of Transportation
PO Box 201001
Helena MT 59620-1001
(406)444-6113

What is the deadline for submitting applications?

May 31, 2004

**Send to: Safety Management Section
Montana Department of Transportation
PO Box 201001
Helena MT 59620-1001**